

MALTA RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT:

The Malta Field Office is preparing a resource management plan that will cover the lands managed by the Glasgow and Havre field stations and the Malta Field Office. The RMP will direct the long-term management on about 2,420,000 acres of surface and 3,520,000 acres of subsurface within the three office areas. This plan will replace the West HiLine RMP and the Valley-Phillips portion of the Judith-Valley-Phillips RMP. Formal public scoping was completed in October 2006.

ISSUES:

The planning team is preparing a reasonable range of alternatives considering the following issue themes: access and transportation management; ecosystem management; energy development and other commercial uses; land ownership adjustments; recreation, visitor services and off-highway vehicles; and special management area designations. These alternatives will meet goals and objectives developed by the interdisciplinary team. To comply with NEPA, Council on Environmental Quality regulations, and BLM planning regulations and guidance, alternatives should be reasonable and possible to implement.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

In May 2006, the Montana State Office approved a preparation plan. Public scoping began September 9, 2006, with the publication of the notice of intent, and ended November 15, 2006. A report completed in May 2007 summarized the scoping process, including the solicitation of public comment and identification/refinement of the planning issues; it is available at the Malta Field Office. The Malta Field Office continues working collaboratively with the various HiLine communities, tribes, and state and local governments in determining alternatives.

Memorandums of understanding (MOUs) have been formalized establishing cooperating agency status for the following agencies: Phillips County commissioners, Valley County commissioners, Blaine County commissioners, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Additionally MOUs were executed establishing cooperating agency status for the following eight cooperative state grazing districts: Badlands, Buggy Creek, North Blaine, North Phillips, North Valley, South Phillips, Wayne Creek, and Willow Creek. Ongoing outreach continues to develop opportunities for collaborative planning.

Local economic strategies workshops were conducted in February 2007 in three HiLine communities: Shelby, Chinook, and Glasgow. The purpose of these workshops was to identify how the local and regional economy has changed and its relationship to public land management. Information discussed during these workshops provides a greater insight into planning issues and allows greater opportunities for collaborative planning.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE:

Public interest will be high because of energy development, greater sage-grouse populations and access to public lands.

CONTACT:

G. Claire Trent, RMP Project Manager, 406-654-5124